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Eighth meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts of African Least Developed Countries

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 22-24 March 1989

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Ninth meeting of the Conference of Ministers of African Least Developed Countries

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 4-5 April 1989

LC/RAN/138.

REVIEW OF ECA ACTIVITIES IN 1988-1989 AND WORK PROGRAMME FOR 1990-1991 IN FAVOUR OF THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES IN AFRICA

INTRODUCTION

1. Prior to the United Nations Conference on LDCs in September 1981, the ECA Conference of Ministers adopted resolution 397(XV), defining the role of the ECA in the development process of the African LDCs. In that context the Commission had established the institutional machinery for the monitoring, review and evaluation of progress in the implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action (SNPA) in the African region. It encompasses the Conference of Ministers of African LDCs as a subsidiary organ of the Commission; the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts of African LDCs and the LDCs unit of the secretariat which provides technical back-stopping to the LDCs policy-making organ. To permit a coherence in programme execution, the Executive Secretary established an ECA inter-divisional committee on LDCs responsible for the co-ordination of ECA's assistance to the LDCs in Africa.

2. The ECA special programme for the LDCs focusses on the improvement in institutional capabilities of the LDCs in the areas of planning, programming and project preparation and in the design of appropriate development strategies and policies. The elements of the programme are: an annual review of economic and social conditions in the African LDCs; evaluation and monitoring of progress achieved in the implementation of the SNPA; in-depth analytical studies; and the provision of technical assistance and advisory services upon request by the countries.

II. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN IN 1988-1989

A. Development issues and policies

3. The core-programme in favour of the LDCs is executed under this programme element. The basic areas of coverage in 1988 and 1989 consists of:

(i) Review of economic and social conditions in African LDCs for the periods 1986-1987 and 1980-1988

4. The reviews provided the intellectual and policy framework for the 1988 and 1989 annual meetings of the Conference of Ministers. It generally analysed the economic growth trends and development performance of the LDCs as a group. This was followed by country chapters that analysed the peculiar problems of the individual economies and policy measures enunciated by them to foster their development process.

(ii) Progress reports on the implementation of the SNPA

5. Two progress reports were prepared by the secretariat as part of the monitoring, evaluation and assessment exercise for the periods 1986-1987 and 1981-1988. Against the background of an assessment of the economic and social conditions in the African LDCs, the studies focussed on: actions and policy measures adopted by the LDCs in the management of their respective economies

and actions taken to mobilize resources for development; international support measures, especially official development assistance (ODA) flows; aid modalities and other features of bilateral and multilateral assistance including commodity stabilization schemes.

6. The progress report covering 1986-1987 (document E/ECA/LDCs;8/EXP.7/3) was submitted to the Eighth meeting of the Conference of Ministers of African LDCs (Niamey, Niger, April 1988). The ministers, after considering the document, expressed their dissappointment over the slow pace at which the SNPA was being implemented, particularly with respect to the drastic decline in the quality and quantum of external resources and the increasingly burdensome debt-service obligations. At the current meeting, the review of the implementation of the SNPA in the African LDCs covers 1981-1988 and is presented as document E/ECA/LDCs.9/EXP.8/3.

7. In 1988, the secretariat undertook a study on "The development and efficient utilization of human resources in African LDCs". The study evaluated expenditure patterns in education, especially the allocative efficiency of educational investment at various levels of the education ladder. The cost effectiveness in terms of skills development and their relevance to the development process was also analysed. An attempt was made to explore the causality between poverty, education and productivity notably of the neglected rural segment of the population which is invariably relegated in favour of the urban sector with respect to accessibility to and equitable distribution of educational investment.

8. The study was before the eighth meeting of the Conference of Ministers of African LDCs which was held in Niamey, Niger in April 1988. The Conference, after reviewing the problems of education and employment, emphasized the need to strike a balance between training and employment, the various cycles of education and formal education and functional literacy. The Ministers also underscored the necessity to develop guidance programme in order to ensure the total integration of primary and secondary school drop-outs in the devleopment process.

(iii) Technical assistance and advisory services

9. An integral element, of the annual missions for the collection of data and information for the Survey of Economic and Social Conditions in African countries, is an advisory aspect which aims at strengthening the capabilities of the National Planning Institutions to enable them to review the economic situation in the respective LDCs. In 1988, such advisory missions visited Benin, Comoros, Gambia, Guinea, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda.

B. ECA Inter-divisional Committee on LDCs

(i) Food and agriculture

The ECA/FAO Joint Agriculture Division programme of assistance to LDCs is geared towards the creation of an agricultural environment for the enhancement of production and the attainment of food self-sufficiency in the context of the FAO regional food plan for Africa. The secretariat places emphasis on the improvement of policy and planning strategies including the effective formulation, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects. As part of the regular work programme, an in-depth analysis of on-going agricultural policy and planning practices was undertaking covering a number of African LDCs. Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Rwanda and Sudan were provided assistance aimed at amelorating their capacities in the formulation and execution of agricultural policies and plans and the collection and analysis of agricultural statistical data.

11. In 1988, assistance was provided to Chad in the preparation of programmes in the agricultural and rural development sectors which was an integral part of the country's economic recovery programme. Advisory services and technical back-stopping was made available to Lesotho and Mozambique on the testing and demonstration of techniques in maize production in the context of the sub-regional maize research network. Rwanda and Burundi, as members of the CEPGL countries, benefitted from studies on rural fish culture development and technology transfer.

12. Other activities have centered on the: improvement of marketing policies, institutions, facilities and services and input supply; training and manpower development in agricultural marketing; and food security. In this respect, studies were carried out on pricing and marketing systems in Burundi, Ethiopia and Rwanda. A seminar held in June 1988 on measures to reduce losses in roots and tuber and animal products involved Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea and Rwanda.

(ii) International Trade and Finance

13. The activities undertaken in this area that benefitted a number of African LDCs focussed on: training, trade liberalization and development, intra-African trade and dissemination of trade information. The project studies included, among others: Feasibility Study on the Establishment of a Trade and Development Bank for Eastern and Southern Africa which covered such LDCs as Botswana, Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda.

14. The implementation of an ECA/UNDP project on "Selective Managerial Training of State Trading Organization (STO) Personnel in Sub-Saharan African Countries in Management and Development of STOS" aimed at improving management and operational efficiency of STOS involved Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Comoros, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda.

(iii) Other sectoral activities

15. In the framework of the industrial development decade for Africa (IDDA), the secretariat is given top priority to the development of industrial branches that are supportive of agriculture; the promotion and development of small and medium-scale enterprises and other domestic resource-base industries. In the area of natural resources development, technical assistance and advisory missions to the LDCs centre on the exploration and exploitation of the minerals and metals potential, energy and water resources. ECA's specialized regional centres in cartography and remote sensing are providing various services to the LDCs. These institutions are: the Regional Centre for Training in Aerospace Surveys, (RECTAS); the Regional Centre for Services in Surveys, Mapping and Remote Sensing (RCSSMRS) and the Regional Centre for Remote Sensing (CRTO).

16. The United Nations Transport and Communications Decade for Africa (UNTACDA) ended in 1988. The activities of the secretariat had focussed on improving transport and communication infrastructure and services; assistance in the development of projects, the improvement of policies and the mobilization of external resources for the implementation of sub-regional and regional projects.

17. As a result of intensive efforts by the secretariat, a number of the LDCs have now established firm policies to control the rate of population growth and to reduce rural-urban migration. ECA technical assistance and advisory services is aimed at reinforcing population policies by providing assistance for the establishment of appropriate population data banks and to enhance the capabilities of nationals in analyzing demographic data in preparation of coherent population policies as an integral part of national development plans.

C. Follow-up Actions on ECA Resolution 643(XXIII): Preparation for the Second United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries

18. In accordance with para. 3 of Resolution 643(XXIII), the ECA Executive Secretary fielded a mission to Geneva in November 1988 to discuss with officials of UNCTAD special programme for least developed, landlocked and island countries, the practical modalities of implementation of the resolution. The two secretariats, through UNDP funding will undertake missions in 1989 to all African LDCs to assess the status of the preparation of their country papers for the Second United Nations Conference on LDCs and to determine their assistance needs in this respect.

D. Conferences/Meetings

(i) Meetings of LDCs' organs

19. In the context of subprogramme element 3.5 for the LDCs, the secretariat organized and serviced the seventh and eighth preparatory meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts and the eighth and ninth meetings of the Conference of Ministers of African LDCs in Niamey in April 1988 and Addis Ababa in April 1989, respectively. The eighth meeting of the conference reviewed the economic and social conditions in African LDCs, particularly with respect to the major problems encountered and policies pursued by them during 1986-1987 and examined the progress achieved in the implementation of the SNPA during the same period. The meeting further considered the recommendations contained in the studies on the development and efficient utilization of human resources in the African LDCs.

20. The ninth meeting of the Conference of Ministers is devoted to the preparation for the Second United Nations Conference on LDCs scheduled for September, 1990 in Paris, France. Before the Conference are: A Review of Economic and Social Conditions in African LDCs, 1980-1988; A Review of the Implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action in the African LDCs, 1981-1988 and policies and measures for the 1990s; and the growth and structure of financial institutions in African LDCs.

(ii) Roundtable meetings

21. Upon the invitation of the Governments, the ECA secretariat participated in the UNDP Roundtable meetings for Central African Republic, Chad, Lesotho, Niger and Sao Tome and Principe.

E. ECA Special Programme for African LDCs, 1990-1991

Programme: 3. Development issues and policies in Africa

(i) Programme element: 3.1 Technical assistance and advisory services to Least Developed Countries.

Final output/service (or, if neither, intermediate activity) in 1990-1991:

Advisory services: Eight advisory missions (4 in 1990 and 4 in 1991) to African Least Developed Countries, on request, for the preparation and organization of donors' meetings and roundtables; in project and plan preparation and evaluation.

(ii) Programme element: 3.2 Review of economic and social conditions in Least Developed countries.

Final output/service (or, if neither, intermediate activity) in 1990-1991:

Output: Reports to the Conference of Ministers of African least developed countries:

(a) On the review of economic and social conditions in African Least Developed Countries 1980-1988 (first quarter 1990); (will be an input to the UN Conference on LDCs (third quarter 1990),

(b) On the review of economic and social conditions in African Least Developed Countries 1989-1990. (third quarter 1991).

(iii) Programme element: 3.3 Progress reports on the implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action and the Long-term development strategies and policies in the 1990s for the least developed countries.

Final output/service (or, if neither, intermediate activity) in 1990-1991:

Outputs:

(a) Report to the tenth meeting of the Conference of Ministers of African LDCs on a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action in the African LDCs during the 1980s and measures for accelerating their development process in the 1990s (second quarter 1990) The study will also be an input to the Second UN Conference on LDCs (Third quarter 1990).

(b) Report to the eleventh meeting of the Conference of Ministers of African LDCs on a critical evaluation of the outcome of the Second UN Conference on LDCs in the context of the long-term national social and economic development strategies and policies of the African LDCs in the 1990s.

Intermediate activities (1990-1991)

(c) Servicing and participation in a meeting of the UNCTAL Intergovernmental Group on LDCs preparatory to the Second UN Conference on LDCs, Geneva, 26 March to 6 April 1990.

(d) Inter-Agency consultations of organizations of the United Nations System preparatory to the Second UN Conference on LDCs (Geneva, July 1990).

(e) Senior official consultations prior to the Second UN Conference, Geneva, 30-31 August 1990.

(f) Second UN Conference on LDCs, Paris, 3-14 September 1990.

(iv) Programme element: 3.4 Indepth studies on the economies of the African Least Developed Countries.

Final output/service (or, if neither, intermediate activity) in 1990-1991:

Output: Reports to the Conference of Ministers of African Least Developed Countries on:

(a) An evaluation of employment policies in African LDCs (second quarter 1990).

(b) Agricultural pricing policies in African LDCs (second quarter 1991).

Intermediate activity:

Studies on doemstic resource mobilization during 1990 and 1991.

(v) Programme element: 3.5 Servicing of the Conference of Ministers of Least Developed Countries.

Final output/service (or, if neither, intermediate activity) in 1990-1991:

Output: Substantive servicing of the meetings of the ninth and tenth meeting of Intergovernmental Committee of Experts and of the tenth and eleventh meetings of the Conference of Ministers of African LDCs (second quarter 1990, second quarter 1991).